

# Fort St. John Performance Based Pilot Project

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## Executive Summary

In the spring of 1999, the British Columbia Legislature added Part 10.1 to the Forest Practices Code Act, enabling establishment of pilot projects to experiment with ways to improve the regulatory framework for forest practices. Canadian Forest Products Ltd., Slocan Forest Products Ltd. and Louisiana-Pacific Canada Ltd. welcome the opportunity this legislation provides to introduce new concepts for forest management in BC. These concepts are founded on a strong commitment to environmental responsibility and stewardship of the forest resource.

Canfor announced to its shareholders in April 1999 that it would undertake certification of its forestry operations on TFL #37 (Englewood) and TFL #48 (Chetwynd) to Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards by the middle of 2000. Application of certification standards on lands managed under volume based forest tenures, such as those in the Fort St. John TSA, requires further clarification. **Identification of a Defined Forest Area (DFA) under the proposed pilot project, and coordination of forestry planning and operations within the DFA by Canfor and its partners, will enable testing of CSA and FSC certification process within the pilot project area.**

The key element of this proposal is the application of the Canadian Standards Association Sustainable Forest Management (CSA SFM) standard to forestry operations in the western portion of the Fort St. John Timber Supply Area. Under the CSA SFM standard, sustainable forest management can be verified by addressing the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers' (CCFM) six criteria. Local values, goals and indicators to address the criteria will be developed in consultation with a public advisory group. This group will be comprised of sector representatives and government agency representatives who participated in the Fort St. John Land and Resource Planning (LRMP) process, plus representatives of local First Nations. **All major forest licencees in the Fort St. John Timber Supply Area (TSA), including Canfor, Slocan Forest Products Ltd., Louisiana-Pacific Canada Ltd. and the Small Business Forest Enterprise Program (the Project Partners), will participate in application of the CSA standard to forestry planning operations in the western portion of the TSA.** The western portion of the Fort St. John TSA (the Pilot Project Area) is identified as that area of the TSA located west of the Alaska Highway. The Pilot Project Area is approximately 1.56 million hectares and will be the site of a combined annual coniferous and deciduous harvest of approximately 620,000 cubic metres, or 4% of the Prince George Forest Region allowable annual cut.

An essential component of the certification process is third party verification of stated performance. External validation of forestry practices is an important discipline for the project partners and is also a valuable way for the public to gain confidence in our performance. However, voluntary validation processes are often a duplication of inspection processes traditionally undertaken by government agencies.

## Fort St. John Performance Based Pilot Project

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Furthermore, many of BC's review and approval processes are redundant in situations where licencees have implemented voluntary management systems to meet established registration standards. **Under the pilot project, the project partners propose to replace a series of legislated or regulated forest management and operational processes with internally developed processes that focus on achievement of externally driven objectives and targets.** In so doing, we hope to foster change in culture from the current prescriptive atmosphere to one that encourages innovation and creativity.

Canfor will assume a leadership role in the pilot project because it is the primary coniferous licensee in the Fort St. John TSA (78% of the coniferous Allowable Annual Cut) and has considerably more experience in the TSA than the other licensee partners.

Canfor and its partners will produce a forest management plan as the product of input from the public, government agencies, First Nations and industry toward establishment of values, goals and indicators to address CSA sustainability criteria. The forest management plan, along with approved higher level plans, the approved LRMP, The Graham River Integrated Resource Management Plan, Landscape Unit Plans and other land use plans will provide general management direction for forestry operations in the Pilot Project Area. The Project Partners propose that a single integrated Forest Development Plan (FDP), including identification of five or more years of proposed operations for each major tenure holder, be prepared jointly by the participants. **The FDP, once approved by the Forest Service District Manager, will lead to issuance of cutting permits, timber sale licences and road permits identified under the plan for a designated period. We propose that no other approvals be required under the FPC or associated regulations, provided operations are consistent with the spirit and intent of the forest management plan, the FDP and the criteria identified in the pilot project enabling regulation(s).**

Forestry operations conducted under the approved FDP, including planning, silviculture, road construction, road maintenance, forest health activities and harvesting, will be consistent with Canfor's recently developed Environmental Management System (EMS). This system considers the significant aspects of the company's forestry operations and applies management controls to address-identified risks and meet legal requirements. Canfor's EMS, including that proposed for the pilot project, has been designed to comply with, and will be accredited under, the ISO 14001 standard.

Canfor has recently developed a series of forestry principles that will provide the foundation for the company's policies, strategies and operating procedures at all its operations. The principles are based on ecosystem management and will lead to application of the best science available to balance environmental, social and economic considerations in the management of the forest resource. **Canfor's Forestry Principles will be implemented and applied under the Fort St. John pilot project, in part, through application of the province's landscape unit planning strategy.**

Despite the existence of Forest Renewal BC (FRBC), investment for the long-term management of BC's crown forests lags behind that being made in many other jurisdictions in Canada and the rest of the world. Canfor and Slocan have recognized the advantages of a simply administered, focussed investment program and have worked diligently with FRBC to develop Multi-Year Agreements to address this need.

## Fort St. John Performance Based Pilot Project

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The result has been successful implementation of numerous silviculture and resource inventory programs under a greatly simplified administrative environment. However, the level of investment in many important programs is still insufficient. The Project Partners will address the need for increased investment in forest inventory, research and enhanced silviculture in the Pilot Project Area by proposing a greater commitment of investment funds in the area by FRBC. Investment planning will be the responsibility of the Project Partners in consultation with FRBC and the public advisory committee, applied through the forest management plan and Forest Development Plans. Although this funding is necessary to improve local timber and non-timber forest inventories and the productivity of the forest land base, it is not a necessary pre-requisite for the Project Partners to proceed with the pilot project. Canfor has made a commitment to certification of its forestry operations, and as proponent of the pilot project, is willing to commit resources to the pilot in the long term, for future benefits.

First Nations within the Fort St. John TSA are signatory to Treaty Number 8, and unlike most BC First Nations, they are not participating in the BC treaty process. While Treaty Number 8 explicitly provides protection for traditional hunting, fishing and trapping activities, Treaty 8 First Nations' declare that the Treaty has not provided ample opportunity for their membership to participate in resource-based economic activities. Unsuccessful consultation processes between First Nations, government and industry representatives have manifested the situation. In 1998, BC's Oil and Gas Commission signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with several Treaty 8 First Nations to facilitate consultation between the government and the particular First Nation on proposed oil and gas sector activities. The Project Partners propose that government enter into similar consultation protocol agreements with Treaty 8 First Nations to facilitate consultation on proposed forestry activities under the pilot project.